

# I. THE BRITISH LABOUR PARTY.

## REPORT TO THE INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS, COPENHAGEN, 1910.

### *Membership.*

The following Table shows the membership of the Party for the years 1900, 1907, 1908, and 1909:

		Trade Unions.		Trades Councils and Local Labour Parties.		Socialist Societies.			
	No.	Membership.	No.	No.	Membership.	Total.			
1900	41	353,070	7	3	22,861	375,931			
1907	181	1,049,673	92	2	22,267	1,072,413*			
1908	172	1,121,256	133	2	27,465	1,152,786†			
1909	161	1,445,708	155	2	30,982	1,481,368‡			

\* Includes 472 Co-operators.

† Includes 565 Co-operators and 3,500 members of the Women's Labour League.

‡ Includes 678 Co-operators and 4,000 members of the Women's Labour League.

The chief accession of strength to the Party during 1909 was the affiliation of the Miners' Federation of Great Britain, with a membership of 550,000.

### *Finance.*

The Labour Party is financed by two Funds: (a) The General Fund to which affiliated Trade Unions and Socialist Societies contribute 15s. per 1,000 members per year; and Trades Councils and Local Labour Parties pay 15s. per year when their membership is under 5,000, and 30s. per year when it is over 5,000; and (b) the Parliamentary Fund to which Trade Unions and Socialist Societies contribute 2d. per member per year.

The General Fund bears the expense connected with the ordinary political work of the Party, and a considerable income and expenditure is accounted for by the printing and sales of leaflets, posters, and other literature.

The Parliamentary Fund bears the cost of the Maintenance of the Labour Members in the House of Commons, and the payment of a proportion (one-fourth) of the official election expenses of Candidates.

The following Table summarises the condition of the two Funds for the years 1907, 1908, and 1909:

GENERAL FUND.					
Year.	Affiliation Fees.	Total Income.	Total Expenditure.	Balance at end of Year	
1907	£1,000	£2,297*	£1,793	£504	
1908	963	2,057	2,196	364	
1909	1,435	3,053	2,880	537	
* This includes £508 balance from 1906.					
PARLIAMENTARY FUND.					
Year.	Total Income.	Spent on Parliamentary Maintenance.	Total Expenditure	Balance at end of Year.	
1907	£13,725*	£5,246	£5,990	£7,734	
1908	8,703	6,000	6,690	9,747	
1909	13,826	6,733	8,818	14,755	
* This includes £4,792 balance from 1906.					

## General Election, 1910.

In 1906 the Labour Party in Parliament numbered 30, and during the succeeding three years it fought 13 bye-elections, of which three were won. The Parliament thus ended with 33 Labour Members.

Seventy-eight Labour Candidates fought in the General Election which took place this year, including the whole of the 33 sitting Members and 11 Members for whom the Miners' Federation of Great Britain were responsible, but who in the previous Parliament had sat as Liberals.

The result was that the Party lost eight seats and won three, showing a nett loss of five. Under the circumstances the result was not disappointing. In the election of 1906 the tide in our favour was full, and the number of Labour Members elected surprised everybody. The election of 1910, on the other hand, was of a special nature. The Government was defending a Budget, the main provisions of which were supported by the Labour Party, both in Parliament and in the country, and a constitutional issue relating to the powers of the House of Lords in rejecting legislation was regarded by the whole country as three-cornered fights than we would have done under normal political conditions, and we were unable to make good our inevitable losses by capturing seats which in ordinary times might have fallen to us.

The total number of votes polled by our Candidates was 505,690, an increase of 183,506 on the total vote of 1906.

## Municipal Elections.

The following Table shows the results of Municipal Elections contested by nominees of the Trade Unions and the Independent Labour Party (I.L.P.) during the years 1907, 1908, and 1909. In practically every constituency the contests are conducted by local organisations composed of representatives from the Unions and the I.L.P. Branches working harmoniously on the lines of the National Party.

Year.	Number of Candidates.	Successful.	Gains.	Losses.	Net Result.
1907	274	78	43	31	12 Gains
1908	313	88	35	64	29 Losses
1909	422	108	49	28	21 Gains

It must be noted that these contests, as a rule, only relate to one-third of the local Councils, as one-third of the Municipal Councilors retire each year.

## Press.

In the matter of the Press the Party has little to report. The "Labour Leader" (weekly) and the "Socialist Review" (monthly) belong to an affiliated society, the Independent Labour Party; while various Labour organisations with which we are in contact publish local weekly journals like the "Woolwich Pioneer," the "Leicester Pioneer," the "Forward" (Glasgow), the "Coventry Sentinel," and the "Huddersfield Worker"; but the Party has no press of its own, strictly speaking. The difficulties of starting such a press in England are enormous, as the great efficiency of the capitalist journals puts competition almost out of the question, unless the new paper has a capital behind it of £250,000 to £500,000. Moreover, newspapers are being less and less bought in England for political reasons, so that the Party cannot appeal with much force to the political sympathies of its supporters in order to secure the circulation that is necessary to maintain a paper under British conditions. The matter is constantly receiving attention, but at the moment it is blocked by the Osborne judgment, which prevents Trade Unions from spending money on things connected with political activities.

## Education.

The Party conducts no educational work directly, but its affiliated societies do a good deal. The Trade Unions, for instance, have started a school at Oxford to which a certain number of Trade Unionists go and stay for two years at the expense of their unions; whilst in connection with the Independent Labour Party there is an active Socialist Sunday School.

The Party's propaganda is conducted almost exclusively by means of public meetings, some hundreds of which our affiliated societies hold every week, and also by the publication of leaflets, of which we distributed 6,000,000 last year.

## ***Relations with Socialist Parties.***

The Party's relations with the British Socialist Parties remain cordial with one exception. The Independent Labour Party, which is far and away the strongest numerically, and the Fabian Society, which represents the intellectual Socialists, are both affiliated and are represented on the National Executive.

## ***Trade Union Organisations.***

Under this heading all that need be reported, in view of the fact that Comrade Legien has full detailed information, is that from the beginning of this year the Miners' Federation of Great Britain has been affiliated with the Party, which can now claim to have the active and expressed support of every Trade Union of any importance in the country.

## **PARLIAMENTARY REPORT, 1907—1909.**

Following the procedure adopted at the opening of Parliament in 1906, the Parliamentary Party appointed from its own Members, Committees for the consideration of Parliamentary action on the following specific subjects: Government Finance; Municipal Legislation; Railway and Transit Laws, Education; the Conditions and Wages of Workers under Government Employment and under Government Contracts. In addition to these, special Committees were appointed to consider various Bills brought forward by the Government, and Members have been appointed to sit on official Committees, and Commissions for the purpose of inquiring into various Industrial matters, administrative reform, and proposed new legislation.

## ***The Unemployed.***

The questions of Unemployed Legislation and the administration of Government Grants in relief of industrial distress have occupied much of the attention of the Party. In 1907 the Party introduced the Unemployed Workmen's Bill, by which it sought to provide work or maintenance for the unemployed through the machinery of local and central committees. The Government declined to give facilities for the passing of the Bill, and it was again introduced in 1908, when its second reading was supported by 116 Members, although it met with the strenuous opposition of the Government. It was again brought forward in 1909, when there voted for it 115, against 228.

During the past year the effect of the Party's agitation on this subject has resulted in the establishment of Labour Exchanges throughout the chief industrial centres, and it is now known that a scheme of Insurance against Unemployment is in preparation and will probably be brought forward by the Government in a short time.

A Government measure, called the Development Bill, which was a supplement to the Budget of 1909, also borrowed considerably from the proposals made in the Party's "Right to Work" Bill. The Development Bill was in two sections, the more important part being that in which £2,000,000, extending over a period of four years, was to be devoted to schemes of afforestation and the promotion of agriculture and dairy-farming. Commissioners were appointed by the Bill to consider the suitability or otherwise of the schemes submitted to them, and one important Amendment that the Party secured enables the Commissioners themselves to frame schemes. There is no doubt that the possibilities under the Bill are very wide, and, incidentally, could be productive of much good in dealing with the question of Unemployment, for in the operation of the Bill due regard has to be given to the fluctuations of ordinary employment.

With so much accomplished or in prospect, the Party's original Bill has now to be redrafted so as to bring it into touch with the new legislation and to enable the agitation to be carried on with more definiteness and greater practical effect.

## ***The Hungry Child.***

When in 1906 the Labour Party appeared in Parliament, thirty strong, the first measure they introduced was one to feed underfed school children. The Bill was remitted to a Select Committee, where it was considerably amended. On the initiative of the Labour representative on the Committee it was laid down that parents of children obtaining meals under the Act should not be disfranchised. An attempt to make the measure compulsory was defeated. The Act is at present in operation in upward of one hundred districts, and many thousands of hungry children have been fed.

## ***The Aged Poor.***

For years the cry of Old Age Pensions had been bandied about at elections without any attempt being made to translate promise into legislation, and when in 1906 no mention of Pensions was made by the Government, the Party carried a motion in favour of Pensions before the Session closed.

In 1907, the King's Speech contained no reference to Pensions, and the Party moved an amendment demanding legislation. Reference was similarly made to the matter in 1908, and when, later on, the Government's promised Bill appeared, the Party endeavoured to secure amendments to its many unsatisfactory provisions. Unsuccessful attempts were made to reduce the pensionable age from 70 to 65, to remove the pauper disqualification, and to secure 5s. as the minimum pension in place of the

existing sliding scale. The provision whereby the Government sought to reduce the pensions of aged couples living together was the subject of opposition by the Party, and, as a result, was abolished.

The pauper disqualification is to be removed at the end of this year.

### ***The Sweated.***

The Party was responsible for the Trades Boards Bill introduced in 1908, which sought to establish a minimum wage in Sweated Industries. Pressure was brought to bear upon the Government, and the immediate outcome was the Trades Boards Act, which was passed in 1909, applying the principle of a minimum wage to certain badly paid trades and allowing of its extension to other sweated industries.

### ***The Miner.***

In the first session of the Parliament of 1906 the Labour Party did all that was possible to promote the passage of the Eight Hours Bill introduced on behalf of the Miners' Federation. The second reading was carried, but as the Government declined to afford facilities for its consideration no material progress was made. In 1907 the Bill was introduced by the Party and a pledge was secured from the Government that legislation would be forthcoming at an early date. The following year the Government Bill was produced, and many necessary amendments were moved by the Party when the measure reached the Committee stage. An amendment providing that the Bill should not apply to districts where the hours were already less than eight, moved by the Party, met with the strong opposition of the Government, and was defeated, and finally the Coal Mines (Eight Hours) Act became law.

The Miners' Eight Hours Bill was first introduced over twenty years ago, but not until Labour sat as an independent force in Parliament was it placed on the Statute Book.

### ***The Trade Unionist.***

When the usefulness of Trade Unions as industrial combinations was destroyed by the famous Taff Vale judgment, repeated but unsuccessful attempts were made to amend the law. This issue formed one of the chief demands of the Labour movement in 1906, and the Party introduced a Bill for the purpose of safeguarding the Unions against the encroachments of the employers. The Government brought out a measure of its own, but its terms were so unsatisfactory that the Labour Party persisted in pressing forward its own Bill, and succeeded in gaining legislative acceptance to the Trade Unions.

Since then the Law Courts have decided that it is illegal for Trade Unions to levy their members for political purposes (the

*Dalme v. Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants case*), and the Party is now promoting a Bill to restore this ancient right of organised labour.

The Party also promoted a Bill to prevent the importation of Foreign Blacklegs into this country during trade disputes, but after passing through all stages in the Commons it was rejected by the Lords.

Following the exportation of British labourers to break down the Antwerp Dock Strike in 1907, the Party also introduced a Bill for the prevention of such attacks upon Continental trade unionists, but as no facilities have been granted for its consideration, no progress has been made.

A considerable portion of the Party's activities has been given to the questioning of Ministers respecting the observance of the clause in Government contracts providing for the adoption of trade union wages, hours, and conditions. The terms of the clause itself have been strengthened and in many ways the conditions of Government service have been improved.

The Party has also been active in its criticism of the Factory Acts administration, and, as a result of its complaints respecting the increased number of deaths and accidents in industry, a Government Commission has been appointed to inquire into the subject, and upon which the Party has two representatives.

### ***National Finance.***

The Finance Bill of the Liberal Government for 1909 had the warm though qualified support of the Labour Party. The position of the Party is best explained by the following:

In the early part of the year a Special Conference, attended by 400 delegates representing the various sections of the Party, considered the question of National Finance, and adopted the following guiding principles:

1. Taxation should be in proportion to ability to pay, and to the protection and benefit conferred on the individual by the State.

2. No taxation should be imposed which encroaches on the individual's means to satisfy his physical and primary needs.

3. Taxation should aim at securing for the communal benefit all unearned increment of wealth.

4. Taxation should be levied on unearned incomes, and should aim deliberately at preventing the retention of great fortunes in private hands.

Further, the Conference unanimously passed the following resolution, which laid down the lines followed by the Parliamentary Party in the consideration of the Government's Financial proposals:

"That this Conference calls for a drastic reform of the system of National Taxation so as to secure that it is derived from those



best able to pay it, and who receive the most protection and benefit from the State.

"This Conference, therefore, expresses its determination to resist all proposals to increase the taxation of the masses now being advocated as Tariff Reform and 'broadening the basis of taxation.' It declares that the present indirect taxes fall oppressively on the industrial classes, and should be repealed; and being of opinion that the cost of social reform should be borne by socially-created wealth now appropriated by the rich in the form of rent, interest, and profit, calls for the following reforms in the next Budget, namely:

A Super-tax on large Incomes;  
Special Taxation of State-conferred Monopolies;  
Increased Estate and Legacy Duties;

and a really substantial beginning with the Taxation of Land Values."

### ***The Constitutional Issue, Etc.***

When the Liberal Government in 1907 initiated its discussion respecting the powers of the House of Lords, the Party moved an amendment in favour of the abolition of the Upper House on the grounds of it being irresponsible, unrepresentative, and a hindrance to national progress. The amendment received the support of 102 Members as against 317 for the Government resolution.

### ***International.***

Upon the occasion of the visit of the late King Edward VII. to the Czar of Russia at Reval, and also upon the return visit of the Czar to the Isle of Wight, the Party raised its protest in Parliament and brought attention to the atrocities which have characterised Russian administration during recent years.

The Party would have gladly raised various other matters of international importance in accordance with advice issued by the International Bureau, but could not do so under the Rules and Standing Orders of the House of Commons.

Upon the introduction of the Bill federating the South African States, the Party unsuccessfully attempted to remove the clauses restricting the franchise to persons of European descent and excluding native residents from the electoral roll.

The Party on numerous occasions has sought to redress the wrongs inflicted upon Indians by the British bureaucracy and has lost no opportunity of raising such questions again and again in the House of Commons. The same policy has been pursued regarding other Dependencies, various Members of the Party being deputed to pay special attention to various Colonies.

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